

6668

Therese A. Nadeau, MSW – Employer of Personal Assistants and Advocate for People with Disabilities

My name is Therese Nadeau, and I am a person with a significant physical disability who is an Employer of Personal Assistants. I am also a client receiving services through the Personal Care Assistance Waiver Program. I am providing this testimony in opposition of ***Raised Bill No. 6668: AN ACT PROVIDING QUALITY CARE, FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND NURSING HOME FUNDING REFORM.***

Before I state my opposition, I want to share with you my own personal story. As an employer of Personal Assistants, I experience first hand the tremendous support Personal Assistants play in the lives of people with disabilities. My Personal Assistants are my arms and legs, and are **CRITICAL** to my life! Without their support, I would most likely be institutionalized, unable to do all I do today. Today, I am a person with a Masters Degree in Social Work, a Disability and Emergency Preparedness Consultant working full-time at a well paid career and a tax paying citizen. I wake up each morning with the goal of making a difference in people's lives. For me, I don't wake-up in the morning with an alarm clock, but a "good morning" from my personal assistant, who comes to work early each morning so I am ready on-time to go to work. Then my next assistant comes to pick me up to go to a day at work, meetings, trainings, etc. She is there to provide me with support, and helps to motivate me/provide me with extra support on days when my physical disability can make everyday tasks even more of a challenge. Sometimes, my evenings are busy too. But what it comes down to is thanks to my Personal Assistants, I live a full, productive and independent life!

So why am I opposed to Raised Bill 6668? The answer is there are a lot of unanswered questions, with a lot of opportunity to create a Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council that can take away my rights as an employer to make decisions, affect the level of support I receive, and force me to change my life to meet my needs.

In addition, the way waivers are currently funded, there is a cap structure for services. So the only way to increase wages will be to lower the number of hours for employers. This will push employers, like myself, with high-end needs over the cap and into institutions. It

will also force employers to reduce the number of hours they can offer their Personal Assistants. This would be a huge issue for me.

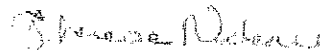
One of the largest concerns, as well is that there is no representation from Personal Assistants on the Workforce Council. Personal Assistant's who have been asked, are strongly opposed to such a Council. They are saying that they like their jobs as is, and any shift towards a decision-making, record-keeping Council with or without a union would be problematic.

As someone who was very involved in helping to advocate for and create the Personal Care Assistance Waiver Program, as well as being a large part of teaching new employers how to hire and manage personal assistants, I clearly understand the Program and what is possible to meet the needs of a variety of people. This bill would possibly create conflict to the structure as it is today.

I want to end my testimony, stating that I also want what is best for my Personal Assistants: adequate wages, a respected career, the possibility for benefits, etc. but Raised Bill 6668 is not the answer to helping this to occur!

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns with you.

Respectfully,



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